

Andrea Bieler and Hans-Martin Gutmann. *Embodying Grace: Proclaiming Justification in the Real World*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010. 192 pages. \$26.

This is a co-authored work by two professors, one American and the other German and both involved in teaching practical theology (as Protestants). This work first appeared in German in 2007 and has now been translated and published in 2010. As the title indicates, there are several issues which the work will invoke: global poverty, the doctrine of justification and the meaning of grace.

In keeping with the world's preoccupations in recent years, the authors state the purpose of their work this way: "Our book seeks to highlight the question of what it means to witness to divine grace poured out abundantly into the world amid economic situations in which many people are made superfluous in relation to the market and in their access to economic and social resources. What does it mean to preach justification in an unjust world....?" (vii). Who does not feel a tinge of concern and personal anxiety on reading this statement, since it has become globally obvious anyone can become superfluous without notice?

The reader should be aware that this work is densely written. It falls into four major areas which include: an examination of poverty and homiletical efforts to respond to this fact; a discussion of grace and justification through liturgical and homiletical examples; the role of scripture in addressing the authors' concern and finally, the understanding that "The Embodiment of Grace [is] as Performative Event" (v-vi). The work makes a heavy investment in rehearsing key elements of Reformation theology. Martin Luther's views are quoted extensively on a variety of subjects. A penchant for using key Latin theological terms, a habit carried over from the Reformation era, is prevalent in parts of the book. For Lutherans, in particular, *incurvatio, simul iustus et peccator, coram Deo, fides facit personam* will come as no surprise.

Each section contains a great deal of historical, Protestant materials related to theology and proclamation. Contemporary topics are also used to focus the authors' wide-ranging interests; for example, insights from historical theology; Gestalt psychology; theories of narrativity; speech-acts and performance theory. Examples of both sermons and liturgies are offered to buttress the author's points. American readers will find some of the German authors and literature quoted both new and helpful.

One liturgy discussed reflects a good summary of the authors' concerns; "we conclude our reflections on preaching the justification of the "expendables" with a rather long account of the Brazilian theologian Julio Cezar Adam of the *romaria da terra*, a special form of procession in which Brazil's "expendables" protest the wounding of the earth, the soil, and their own damaged environments and celebrate in praise and thanksgiving a foretaste of the resurrection of the body" (164).

There is an enormous amount of material covered in this book. Individual sections could serve as study foci on their own merits. Undoubtedly the authors have focused on a truly global and troublesome area of global, personal and theological concern. This work reflects well many elements of today's troubled world economies and how God's grace continues to bless, justify and challenge through the acts of reflection, proclamation and worship.

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